

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVER

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7599

CHK N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1595

E.O. 11652: XGDS1

TAGS: PINT, MILL, MA

SUBJECT: RATSIRAKA AND THE MALAGASY MILITARY

REF: TANANARIVE 1534

SUMMARY: REPORTS OF GROWING DISENCHANMENT WITH PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA AMONG ELEMENTS OF MALAGASY MILITARY HAVE BEEN WIDE-SPREAD IN TANANARIVE IN RECENT WEEKS. RATSIRAKA, HOWEVER, WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE GAINED UPPER HAND OVER POSSIBLE DISSIDENTS BY RECENT ACTIONS, FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST. END SUMMARY.

1. MALAGASY PRESIDENT DIDIER RATSIRAKA SEPTEMBER 13 ADDRESSED "ANNUAL MEETING" OF HSSL RANKING OFFICERS OF MALAGASY ARMED FORCES HELD AT IVATO AIRBASE NEAR TANANARIVE SEPTEMBER 8-13. IN SPEECH, WHICH WAS HEADLINED IN LOCAL PRESS SEPTEMBER 15, RATSIRAKA ANNOUNCED MAJOR NEW PROGRAM OF ACQUISITION OF MATERIAL FOR MILITARY, INCLUDING AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS, AND NAVAL CRAFT, AND EXPLF FORCES AND BASES. HE ALSO STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF MILITARY WORKING WITH PEASANTS IN COUNTRYSIDE AND BECOMING "SPEARHEAD OF THE SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION OF THE FATHERLAND." RATSIRAKC ANNOUNCED IMMINENT RETIREMENT OF BRIGADIER GENERAL PHILIBERT RAMAROLAHY, CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF, AND PRESENTED TO ASSEMBLED OFFICERS (WHO FROM PRESS PHOTO APPEAR TO NUMBER OVER 100) MODELS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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NEW UNIFORMS TO BE INTRODUCED FOR MALAGASY MILITARY.

2. BEFORE STAGING OF "ANNUAL MEETING" OF OFFICERS OF MALAGASY ARMED FORCES (NEVER BEFORE KNOWN AS AN ANNUAL EVENT), REPORTS

AND RUMORS OF GROWING  
DISENCHANTMENT WITH RATSIRAKA AMONG  
ELEMENTS OF MALAGASY MILITARY WERE WIDESPREAD IN TANANARIVE  
IN EARLY SEPTEMBER. ON SEPTEMBER 4 A LOCAL NEWSPAPER  
PUBLISHER INFORMED PAO A NUMBER OF MILITARY OFFICERS, INCLUDING SEVERAL ON 8-MAN SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (CSR), ARE BECOMING DISILLUSIONED WITH RATSIRAKA AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM REPLACED AS PRESIDENT OF CSR. SEVERAL SOURCES REPORTED RESIGNATION OR ATTEMPTED RESIGNATION OF MAJOR SOJA, LEADING PROTEGE OF ASSASSINATED FORMER CHIEF OF STATE COLONEL RATSIMANDRAVA, TOGETHER WITH SOJA'S CLOSE ASSOCIATE MAJOR ANDRIAMAHOLISON, ALSO OF GENDARMERIE. EMBASSY ALSO RECEIVED REPORTS THAT MOST MEMBERS OF MILITARY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INCLUDING FORMER CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL ANDRIAMAHAZO, ARE NOW COOL TOWARD RATSIRAKA OR CRITICAL OF HIM, AND RESENT HIS HIGH-HAOCED RUNNING OF AFFAIRS.

3. DATT RECENTLY INFORMED BY SOURCE BELIEVED RELIABLE (A FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE) THAT SOJA AND ANDRIAMAHOLISON WERE IN FACT DETAINED FOR SEVERAL DAYS DURING EARLY SEPTEMBER AND QUESTIONED ABOUT REPORTS OF THEIR DISSENSIONET ACCORDING TO SOURCE, SOJA AND ANDRIAMAHOLISON NOW RELEASED, AND GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HOLDING FACT OF THEIR DETENTION VERY TIGHTLY.

4. COMMENT: GIVEN EARLIER WIDE PREVALENCE OF REPORTS OF MALAISE WITHIN ELEMENTS OF MILITARY, SHARP LURCH TO LEFT GOMR HAS TAKEN UNDER RATSIRAKA, AND HIS REPORTEDLY AUTOCRATIC MANNER OF DECISION-MAKING IN GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY, EXISTENCE OF DISENCHANTMENT WITH MADAGASCAR'S NEW PRESIDENT AMONG SOME OFFICERS OF ARMED FORCES AND GENDARMERIE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING. HOWEVER, RATSIRAKA WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE SEIZED INITIATIVE AGAINST ANY POTENTIAL OPPOSITION IN MILITARY FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, BY: (A) CONVOKING LARGE MEETING OF OFFICERS OF ARMED FORCES VISIBLY TO ASSERT HIS LEADERSHIP; (B) HAVING MAJOR SOJA, HIS PRINCIPAL RIVAL ON CONFIDENTIAL

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THE OLD MILITARY DIRECTORY, DETAINED AS A WARNING TO OTHERS; AND (C) PROMISING MILITARY A BASKETFULL OF ARMS AND OTHER GOODIES TO KEEP THEM HAPPY. (COMMANDER OF MALAGASY AIR CORPS HAS ALREADY INFORMALLY INQUIRED OF DATT RE PRICES AND SPECIFICATIONS OF AMERICAN HELICOPTERS -- TO BE REPORTED SEPARATELY.)

5. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT OFFICERS OF GENDARMERIE, MAIN POTENTIAL BASE OF SUPPORT FOR SOJA, WERE NOT INCLUDED IN ARMED FORCES GATHERING. ALSO, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW MILITARY WILL REACT TO BEING PROPELLED INTO COUNTRYSIDE TO WORK WITH PEASANTS, AS RATSIRAKA HAS NOW REPEATEDLY

STATED HE INTENDS THEM TO DO (REFTEL). BUT FOR THE TIME  
BEING AT LEAST, RATSIRAKA WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE UPPER HAND OVER  
POSSIBLE DISSIDENT OR DISENCHANTED ELEMENTS IN  
THE MALAGASY MILITARY.  
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## Message Attributes

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